

Raising the Bar: From Plan...

Years of studies, consultation and community involvement culminated in the production of a milestone document: The SEFC Policy Statement. Normally, policy statements are created to provide general planning principles to guide a site's development. The policy statement for SEFC, however, pushed the boundaries by describing a vision for the development of a sustainable community.

The policy statement included 14 principles of sustainable development to guide the creation of a sustainable community. These principles would carry on throughout the course of development, helping to inform decision-making throughout the design process.

...to Action!

Following the adoption of the policy statement by city council in 1999, it came time to turn the plans into achievable actions. The city engaged a suite of consultants to develop action plans describing how to achieve sustainability targets.

Principles of Sustainable Development for SEFC**1) IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY**

Promote the implementation of sustainable development principles in an urban setting.

2) STEWARDSHIP OF ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

Ensure that the development improves the ecological health of the False Creek basin.

3) ECONOMIC VIABILITY AND VITALITY

Aim to achieve economic viability with opportunities for employment and investment to ensure long-term prosperity.

4) PRIORITIES

Set social and environmental performance targets that can be met in an economically viable fashion.

5) CULTURAL VITALITY

Encourage vitality, diversity and cultural richness, respecting the history and context of the site.

6) LIVABILITY

Enhance the social and natural environment by creating a walkable, safe and green neighbourhood.

7) HOUSING DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

Create housing opportunities for a range of income groups and social and physical infrastructure for people of all ages.

8) EDUCATION

Encourage awareness of the principles of sustainability and how these are implemented on the site.

9) PARTICIPATION

Encourage public involvement in decision-making processes.

10) ACCOUNTABILITY

Promote accountability by monitoring impacts using post-occupancy studies and community consultation.

11) ADAPTABILITY

Ensure that the community can adapt to new social and economic conditions, policies, programs, legislation and technology.

12) INTEGRATION

Promote integration with the city through planning, design, community involvement and public amenities.

13) SPIRIT OF THE PLACE

Promote planning and development guidelines that celebrate the unique natural, social and historical context of SEFC.

14) COMPLETE COMMUNITY

Develop a complete community where residents live, work, play and learn within a convenient walking, cycling or transit-riding distance.

“The praise needs to go to the councils of the day who stepped up to do the ‘Clouds of Change’ report and then supported SEFC through its steps ... It was a combination of strong leadership, commitment, clear vision, excellent technical knowledge and community buy-in.” Mark Holland, Principal, HB Lanarc and former Planner, City of Vancouver



This drawing is taken from a plan submitted to council by development consultant Stanley Kwok at the behest of the City of Vancouver Real Estate Department. Kwok's submission featured residential towers of 20 or more storeys, mimicking

in many ways the pattern of development on the north side of False Creek. The logic behind this high-density plan was that the proposed model would be the only way to generate enough capital to pay for the cleanup of this polluted site.

PROFILE**Graham McGarva**

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As Principal of BMH/VIA, Graham McGarva has worked on the development of SEFC from 1996 to the present. Starting as Stanley Kwok's urban design consultant for the initial concept and policy stages, Graham and his team continued as prime consultant from the Athletes' Village Olympic bid process through to the approval of the SEFC Official Development Plan in 2005. Since then, VIA has rezoned the triangular Hinge Park site at First Avenue and Columbia Street for the post-Olympics phase of Millennium Water, continuing Graham's full SEFC cycle from planning inception to architectural execution.

An early development plan application for SEFC submitted by VIA Architecture, PWL Partnership and Hay & Company contained a suite of poems as part of its urban design principles. The following excerpt paints a picture of the ever-changing landscape at SEFC:

Tidal flats and inlet,
Life dug from the ooze,
Ship slips, loading docks & rail tracks.
Salt, Best, Canron.
Remembering and reusing stuff,
Keeping on trucking,
Working life amid the revelation of water.
Peeling back the industrial wall,
Renewing access denied for a century,
Building future on firm ground.

— Graham McGarva